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MR. SAVAGE'S SERMON,

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. ABRAM OSBORNE, AND MRS. J. N. TOLMAN.

Printed by W. J. Merriam.

MAN A SOJOURNER.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

FITCHBURG, SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 1848,

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. ABRAM OSBORNE, AND MRS. J. N. TOLMAN.

By EDWARD SAVAGE,

PASTOR OF THE VILLAGE BAPTIST CHURCH, IN FITCHBURG.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE author of the following discourse would take the liberty briefly to state the circumstances which called it forth. On the second day of March, 1848, Mrs. Osborne, and her daughter, Mrs. Tolman, were returning home from the village of Fitchburg, Mass., where they had been, together, on business; when, on coming to the Vermont and Mass. Railroad, about a half-mile west of the village, they stopped for the cars to pass before crossing the track. The horse, on seeing the engine, became frightened, and turning around suddenly, backed until the sleigh, striking the rail, upset, and precipitated them both immediately before the engine, when they were killed, the daughter instantly, and the mother living only a few minutes. The ladies were both highly esteemed for their social virtues and moral worth; and their death is sincerely mourned by a large circle of relatives, and by the community in general. These circumstances will account for some of the peculiarities of the discourse, and apologise for the apparent haste with which

it was prepared. The author was urgently requested to publish it, and he has done so reluctantly, yet, hoping that it may do a little good to the friends, and to those living in the immediate vicinity.

S E R M O N .

I PETER, I. 17.

“Pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear.”

MYSTERIOUS indeed are the providences of God. They are so, because ‘He seeth not as man seeth. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways His ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways; and His thoughts, than our thoughts.’ Of these providences, none are more mysterious than those resulting in our final dissolution. Jehovah has indeed affirmed of us, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;” but *when*, and *where*, and *how* this change will be, He alone knows and determines.

Yet death is to us a very common event. It is as common as the vast multitude of human beings that now live, or ever have lived, or ever will live. “For it is appointed unto men once to die. And there is no discharge in that war.” The common proverb says, “*The young may die, but the old must die.*” “Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?” Alas! they have gone the way of all the earth. “For what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live forever, and not see corruption.”

Still there is at times a mystery about this providence of God. To see the infant nipped in the bud—the youth in the blossom—the man or woman cut down in the strength, and vigor, and heart of life, is something unaccountable. And still more mysterious is the providence, when from the family circle, from the neighborhood, from the church of God, a mother—a companion—a daughter—a sister—a Christian, is removed by death—suddenly, without a moment's warning, in the vigor of life, and in the height of usefulness; whose presence with us is a blessing, and whose removal from us seems an irreparable loss.

The providence that has now summoned us together, is one of this mysterious and afflictive kind. It was sudden—unexpected—solemn—awful. In it we are all deeply interested, we are all afflicted, we are all led to sympathize and mourn. Here husbands have been bereaved of kind and affectionate companions, parents of endeared and dutiful daughters, children of faithful and tender mothers, the community of useful and quiet members, and the church of beloved and cherished sisters. Deep is the wound made, and widely is it felt. This is something beyond the common line of God's providences, and summons us all to attend and take warning. Why it should be so, we cannot now tell. We can only say that "God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts." Let us, therefore, "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."

Yet notwithstanding the alarming, solemn and afflictive circumstances connected with this providence, the very commonness of death itself, as an event in the history of mankind, almost from necessity renders the remarks on such an occasion, to the multitude, trite and uninteresting. And

it is this, too, strange to say, which causes it to produce so few salutary impressions on the minds of the living. The bell tolls—it is only a death, a funeral, an every day occurrence, a thing always to be expected ; and the pall, the bier, the coffin, the solemn procession move on—and once out of sight, out of mind. How strangely we act ! Dwelling in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth, we forget that the dust ‘shall soon return unto the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.’

But there are some who are interested in the funeral solemnities—some hearts which are affected. A little circle of bereaved ones will be found, to shed a tear around the coffin, or the new-made grave ; and around the lonely fireside, to speak a word in memory of the beloved ones departed. These hearts know their own bitterness. Others may look on and seem to sympathise, but they cannot enter into the secret of their grief. Others may forget the deceased, and the solemnities of their funeral, soon,—but these, never.

There is a kind of natural feeling in the hearts of the living on such an occasion as this, to have the dead made the subject of discourse. We seem to have a kind of sympathy for them, and to be impressed with the idea that their spirits still linger near, and are interested in what is said and done. Hence the invocations which are frequently made to the dead, and the solemn, affecting eulogies, that are frequently pronounced over them at their funerals. But however interesting this might be to the bereaved, now, and however much common sympathy for their afflictions, and an endeared acquaintance with the deceased might prompt me to this ; I must forbear. My business now is not with

the dead ; it is with the living. For it is to the living that the Apostle says, " Pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear." *They* sleep in their coffins, where no voice nor sound is heard ; but *ye* are " strangers and sojourners here, as all your fathers were."

Peter addressed these words to Christians, but they are equally applicable to us all. The solemn scenes of this day testify that we are not altogether uninterested, as it regards our present life, and future death.

The words of the text have an important meaning. Great force is added to them by the preceding part of the verse. An illusion is there made to the fact, that God shall hereafter in righteousness judge the world ; that is, giving to every man according to his works. Hence, the Apostle exhorts us to " pass the time of our sojourning *here* in fear." We must come to the judgment—to the judgment of an infinitely holy God ; a fearful and solemn event in our future history. An event to which we should look with the most trembling solicitude, and with the most anxious care for a preparation.

1. But the Apostle speaks of us as *sojourners*. A sojourner is one who stops for a time in a place, but does not make that place his permanent abode. Nor does he consider it as such, or feel that he has any special interest there. He may remain there for a night only, or a few days, or a week, or perhaps a year, still he regards it not as his dwelling place ; for he must soon be gone, and journey to another, a more distant home.

Thus it is with us in regard to this present world. We are mere sojourners here. Especially is this true of the Christian. He, by his profession, declares that this world is not his home. The impenitent sinner may not say so. He

may love this world. He may wish to live here always, knowing no better, and desiring no better land. But the Christian, like a true pilgrim, 'seeks a better country, even a heavenly. He looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For he knows, that if this earthly house of his tabernacle were dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. *There, there,* is his home, not *here*; and in this tabernacle he groans, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven.' So he remains here his appointed time, but with his eye on the mark, he journeys on; and though his 'outward man perishes, yet his inward man is renewed day by day.' And that, because the period of his sojourning here is becoming shorter, while his eternal home is drawing nearer.

To prove that this is so, I need not name a Job, who 'would not live always, but who knew that his Redeemer lived, and, though after his skin, worms should destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God.' I need not tell of a David, who, though seated on a throne, and crowned with a monarch's diadem, yet dissatisfied with the place of his sojourning here, declares, "As for me, I shall behold his face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." I need not tell of a Paul, who was "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" and who rejoicing in the thought that his sojourning here was almost ended, exclaims, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my

course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Nor need I tell you of that illustrious band of worthies whom Paul names, " of whom the world was not worthy ; who all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." I need only tell of some in later days, a Brainard, a Pearce, a Payson, and some of our own brethren and sisters in Christ, who, like true sojourners in the house of their pilgrimage, have sung—

"O land of rest, for thee I sigh ;
When will the moment come,
When I shall lay my armor by,
And dwell with Christ at home."

But all mankind are not sojourners here like these. The vast multitude are not, but live as though this world was to be their eternal home, regardless of the fact that ten thousand solemn circumstances admonish them to prepare for another.

2. Hence, the idea is suggested, that though we are sojourners, we have important business to do. We are not placed in this world for nothing. Men from this town, for instance, journey to different parts of the country, to the North or South, or it may be to England or France, but they go not as idlers. They go on business. They have something to do. When Abraham and Jacob went down into Egypt, they went for some purpose. They were indeed only sojourners there, but God had something for them to do. So we, as sojourners in this world, have important

business to transact. The Christian tarries here in order to do good—to let his light shine, that God may be glorified—to have his Christian character established, and his graces matured. He tarries here to prove himself a follower of the Lamb—to run the heavenly race—to win—to receive the crown. Aye, there is enough, full enough for the Christian to do.

But others as well as the Christian, sojourn in this world in order to prepare for another. This life is our probationary season—the season in which we prove what our future destiny shall be, whether to enjoy the bliss of heaven, or to endure the woes of hell. But alas, how familiar we are with this language, and with these truths! We have heard them from our cradles. We have read them in our Testaments at school, and in our Bibles at home. Instructions from our pulpits have told us, the last testimonies of our dying friends have warned us, in life to prepare for death, in *time* to prepare for *eternity*.

Indeed, there is every thing connected with our sojourning here, calculated to make us understand that we have something to do; solemn, important business to do. But do we know it? Do we feel it? Dying fellow sinner, are you aware that you have an immortal soul to be saved or lost? Do you know that God, the Judge of the quick and the dead, has warned you to prepare to meet him? Do you know that “except you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God?” And do you know, that if you die in your present unregenerated state, you cannot stand acquitted before God in the judgement. O, surely you have enough to do, enough for an angel; but how long, or how short a time to do it in, who can tell? Already the bell may

be ringing, and the engine of death may be rolling on which shall crush your mortal existence. "Pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear."

3. But in the text there seems to be something meant in the word *TIME*. There is, for it is in *time* only, that we are sojourners, not in eternity. Besides, *time* to us is longer or shorter, as the life of each individual endures. Hence some sojourning here, live to a ripe old age, and with their silver locks we lay them down in their narrow couch ; while others, in the strength of manhood, bow themselves and take their rest ; and still others, with rosy cheek and innocent laughing eye, from their cradle creep into the grave. Yes, it is but a *time* that we are to pass here in fear.

And what is peculiar about this *time*, it is altogether uncertain. No one knows how long it will be, no one knows how short. Ask the gray-headed father, who has seen his three score years and ten, and he cannot tell when his or my probationary season will end. Ask the glowing youth, flushed with the fondest hopes, and he cannot tell. Ask the profound mathematician, with his Euclid, his Algebra and its exact equations, and he cannot apportion out to each the time of his sojourning here. God alone can solve the problem, which only is made known to us, as the pallid cheek, the quivering lip, the glassy eye, the trembling pulse, the fainting heart, or the sudden and awful crush of the whole machinery of nature, tells us that the days of our pilgrimage here are ended.

How important, then, that this fact with reference to the *time* of our sojourning here should gain our attention ! Yet how few give it their attention ! We seem to think that with some certainty we can calculate upon the future, and

we lay our plans accordingly. Say some, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life ? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." Say others, "To-morrow shall be as this day and more abundant," and in their certainty of life resolve on pulling down their barns and building greater ; while the angel of death is already stealing silently along, to come up into their windows at the hour of midnight to take away the soul. While others, it may be like our friends whose remains are now before us, with their hopes, it is true, fixed on a better world than this, leave their homes, expecting to return joyfully in a few hours, but are brought back struck down by the destroyer.

Once I saw an old man. A hundred and eleven winters had bent and withered his form and whitened his locks.* Other aged men stood around him with gray heads and trembling limbs, but these were not the companions of his youth. He had seen a whole generation pass away, before they were born. I asked myself, where are the companions of his youth ; those who began to live when he began, with as much apparent certainty of life, and as bright, joyous hopes as he ? They had gone, all of them. Death in unnumbered forms, anticipated or unforeseen, had taken them away, and none of them could redeem his brother, or define the period of his sojourn here. Many of them, doubtless, had calculated upon long life, but quickly had they been hurried away, while he stood a lonely monument to point back and tell us of the brief day of their pilgrimage.

* The Rev. Mr. Harvey, of Central New York, who died a few years since.

But will any of us be mocked by this flattering illusion? Will we suppose that we can lay hold on life with a strong hand, and not let it go until we have out-lived all of our generation, and consigned the last one to the grave? The instances of mortality now before us say, that even "in the midst of life, we are in death;" that at any age, in any moment we may be taken. A few days since, and those whose funeral we now attend, were busy in the scenes of life. But they are now dead. Their life has sped like the flight of a weaver's shuttle. With *railroad* speed, their souls have fled into eternity to their God, never to return. How short and uncertain, then, is human life. Surely, with Moses, the man of God, we should each one pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

4. There is also another point in these words of Peter, that we should not overlook, to wit, that we should pass the time of our sojourning here in *fear*. Not in fear of death, merely, for death cannot be avoided, though feared. "For it is appointed unto men once to die." I have seen the man with strong arm, and giant nerve, chain his gates, and lock his doors, and standing at his windows cry "away away," to the passers-by, when the noisome pestilence was around, that his family might escape. But death nevertheless came up into his windows, and his children fell before the noisome pestilence. I have seen the man of wealth, the young man in the morning of life, through fear of death, offer his gold and silver, and the last acre of his paternal inheritance, to bribe the monster to linger away only a few days, but death could not be bribed. He still came on. We have seen, also, the little child, through fear of death, clinging to its mother's arms, as though she by strong parental tenderness and love,

could shield it from the archer's arrow ; yet the arrow flew, and the little one was laid down in death's icy cradle.

As I said, we may fear death, but we cannot escape him. It will do no good. He is indeed the "king of terrors," and strikes fear to many a strong man's heart: but it is not in the fear of death that the Apostle exhorts us to pass the time of our sojourning here. It is something above this. Death can do us no harm. He is a welcome messenger to some, —an angel of mercy. And even in his embrace they have been enabled to shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" To such, death has no terrors. The dying Christian fears him not. Though he walks through the valley and shadow of death, he fears no evil. His hope is in God. Jesus has taken away from him the sting of death. He has conquered him, "who has the power of death," that is, the devil, and placed the crown of victory on the Christian's brow, which in the hour of conflict, enables him to sing the song of triumph.

Nor does the Apostle warn us to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear of *hell*, in particular; though this is indeed to be greatly feared, and to be shunned with a mighty effort. The fear of hell alone, will not keep us from it, nor save us in the dying hour. Many a soul is probably now with the rich man wailing there, who in this world feared hell a thousand fold more, than did multitudes of saints who are now in heaven, praising God and the Lamb. The murderer, condemned in his cell, fears the gallows; yet this does not keep him from it. The thief in

his flight fears the officer and prison, still the officer apprehends him, and casts him into prison. Thus the bare fear of future punishment alone, however strong that fear may be, will not keep us from it. Alas, all the days of our sojourning here we may pass tremblingly in the fear of the wrath to come, and still in the end find all our fears realized, and ourselves overtaken by that wrath!

In fear of *what*, then, does the Apostle mean? In fear of God; who,—as the Creator of all things, the righteous Ruler of the universe, the beneficent Father of mercies,—claims our most humble obedience, our profoundest reverence, and our warmest love. In fear of God; who, as the searcher of hearts, and the impartial judge of all, daily and hourly observes all our doings, and will soon reward every man according to his works.

This was the fear that the Apostle meant. He desired us to pass the time of our sojourning here, knowing that the eye of our great Task-Master is ever upon us. He desired us to have that holy, filial fear of God, which will lead us to obey him continually, with cheerfulness and love. He desired us to have that solemn regard for the truth of God, and the way of salvation from sin and its dreadful consequences, as will lead us to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,”—as will lead us to “live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present world.”

Peter looked forward to the judgment, and desired us to look there too. As an accountable being,—as a man with a rational, immortal spirit,—as a servant of Jesus Christ, and as a steward to whom goods were committed for use and improvement, he had a solemn sense of his responsibilities, and of the near approach of the day of final retribu-

tion. He thought of these things. Nay, he felt them in his inmost soul. They were living, burning truths to him, and every day as a sojourner here, caused him to pass his time in fear, as one who must give account. It is thus he exhorts us to live.

And he considered *time*, too, as the proper, the only season given us, in which to prepare for the judgment. Would he then lose a day, or an hour? Certainly not. A day was of great value to him, and the worth of an hour, even, none could estimate. For he remembered the impressive words of Jesus, when, with his eyes fixed on him, he said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder; and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." With these fearful words sounding in his ears, who would not "pass the time of his sojourning here in fear," and consider as of the greatest value, the brief moments of his stay? Oh! it is in *time*, that we must prepare for eternity. And what is time? What is our life? Let our friends from their coffins, answer. "The momentary vanishing of a vapor. The flight of a weaver's shuttle. The brief journey of a day."

You have listened now to the exhortation of the Apostle, and to the few broken thoughts it has suggested. Shall it be heeded? or shall it not? Is not the melancholy, fearful providence which has called us together, enough to enforce

this exhortation? Must line upon line, and precept upon precept, still be added, to make it clear, and give this truth power—to awaken our consciences, and arouse our sluggish souls to action? Or, as we gaze upon the pall, the biers, the coffins, and the changed countenances of our friends, and think of their sudden and unexpected end, shall we be sufficiently admonished how to live?

There is a class of individuals present, to whom this providence should afford instruction, and drive home to the heart with a divine energy, the words of the text. I refer to wives and mothers; to those who have just begun to lead along their infant charge, or who, in riper years, may stand as matrons at the head, to direct the minds and affairs of their growing households. It is true, individuals of this class die, frequently die, and there is nothing very strange in this. Yet was it not strange, and are you not admonished by the manner in which these mothers died? A mother, and the daughter whom she had reared—also the fond mother of tender offspring—snatched away in a moment, and as it were in each other's embrace, hurried into the eternal world. Death in the speed of his flight, met them, and with one stroke of his scythe mowed them both down. They hardly knew the hand that smote them. "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided."

But, dear friends, why were *they* taken, and *you* left? Why were their prospects for life blasted, and their families broken into, and their companions and children left desolate rather than yours? Why? I cannot tell. And you cannot tell. Looking heavenward, we only can say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But God in

his infinite wisdom, may also see fit to effect a similar revolution in your affairs for life. Remember, it is appointed unto you once to die. And then what a change! But I forbear. Be instructed by this, and "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

There is a word of instruction in this, also, for those of us who are the professed followers of Christ. Our departed friends were disciples of Jesus. Both of them were "sisters beloved," and once the members of this church; the mother at the time of her death, and the daughter until her removal to another town. But their Christian course on earth is finished. The work they had to do for Christ, has been done quickly. We shall see them no more in this earthly sanctuary. We may look around for them, but their places henceforth will be vacant. No more will they come with us to the house of God in company, and with us take sweet counsel.

My Christian friends, the Lord's hand is upon us now, and it is heavy. A breach is made in Zion, and she mourns. The breach is wide; the wound deep. The shafts of death fell where we little thought, and they have pierced the body to the quick. The bare thought of the departed ones is enough to affect our hearts. A mother and a daughter in Israel have gone. And shall not this providence be heeded by us? Is not this a solemn warning to arouse us to greater activity in the cause of Christ? to watch for our Master, "Lest coming suddenly, he find us sleeping?" O! we *should* be aroused from our slumbers, especially those of us who may be at "ease in Zion." Little do we know about the length of our mortal career. Every day is bringing us nearer and nearer the end of our pilgrimage; and

much sooner than we now anticipate it, our Father may say, "Children, come home." And shall we then *feel* that we have been faithful to our trust, that we have done what we could? Are we now living as lights in the world, as strangers and pilgrims here? Are we in the path of duty, with our 'loins girt about with truth, and our lamps burning? Are we prepared to give an account of our stewardship, should our Master call for us as suddenly as he called for them? Think of these things, and "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

This providence is also a loud warning from God to the inhabitants of this town; to all classes of individuals; to the ungodly, and thoughtless, and vain, as well as to the pious and devout. Fellow citizens, God is teaching you all a solemn lesson by this. He is telling you that there is danger in the road of life; that the engine of death may cross your track when you least dream of it; that the train of mortality may at any moment come along, with its heavy rumbling sound, and death bell, and warning whistle, which will send your spirits home to God, and bear your bodies to the grave. And, fellow sinners, men of business, matrons of cares, young men and young women of pleasure, are you prepared for this? I repeat it: Are you prepared for this? Remember, that

"Dangers stand thick in all the way,
To hurry mortals home."

"LOOK OUT FOR THE ENGINE WHILE THE BELL RINGS!" O! what a warning *this*, erected over the pathway of eternity-bound sinners in this town, telling them to prepare to meet God at a moment's warning.

But God in this providence also seems to say to these

mourning friends, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Alas, who of us can tell, when we leave our habitations, whether we ever shall return? Little did you think on that eventful day, that before the sun should set, the rider of the pale horse would rush to your door with such fearful speed, and with such an alarming blast of his trumpet, announce that he had stopped in their way, and wrapped in his snowy winding-sheet, those loved ones, whose safe return, every moment you joyously expected. But it was so. They were met in the way. They have ended their journey, and can never return as they went away. And you, too, are on the road; it may be only a step or so behind them. 'You may go to them, but they cannot come to you.' Prepare, then, to go.

I need not, my dear friends, speak to you, nor to this waiting congregation, of the characters and moral worth of those whose loss you mourn. Mrs. Osborne, all you who knew her know, needed only to be known, to be esteemed and loved as a friend and as a Christian. And what is more, we need not go abroad to learn her worth. It is in the neighborhood and family circle, where she was best known, that she was the most beloved. As it regards her daughter, Mrs. Tolman, it is enough for me to say, that she walked worthy of such a mother. But mother and daughter now have both rested from their toils, and parental and filial cares. They will henceforth only be known, as their history may be read in the records of fond memory, and in their works which do follow them.

Nor need I speak to you of the great vacancy and deep wound, that this providence has made; the severe loss you have sustained, and the heavy bereavement you have suf-

ferred. These are both known to you, and felt. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." The busy world may not perceive this. The passing traveller may not notice it. But the bereaved companions here, these motherless children, these mourning brothers and sisters, and the aged parents perceive the vacancy; they feel the loss.

It is a loss to you, my respected brother, to have the wife of your youth, and the companion of your riper years, the mother of your children, and the sharer of your joys, and soother of your sorrows,—and the child, the early pledge of your affections—herself also a wife and mother—so suddenly removed. Indeed, doubly severe has been the stroke to you. A loss which *yourself* only can fully feel, and which none but God can repair. It is a loss to you, my younger friend, to have the youthful companion of your bosom, and the fond mother of your babes, in a moment torn from your embrace, and all your cherished hopes of happiness in life together, dashed suddenly and forever. It is a loss to you, children, to have your mother taken away, in whose counsels you confided, who watched over you in infancy, and guided your feet in childhood. But why should I go on and reckon up the loss as the family circle widens, mentioning the various bereaved ones by name, and seeking out all the tender ties that have been severed, the links of affection that have been broken, and the heart-strings which have been snapped asunder? The loss will be known and felt enough by you, without any attempt on my part to define it. Each succeeding day will furnish you convincing proof of the value of a wife's tender solicitude, a mother's love, a daughter's filial regard, and a sister's gentle affection.

But, my dear friends, God has a lesson for you to learn in this bereavement. His voice in this is distinct, and not to be misunderstood. By entering your family circle so unexpectedly, and removing those so dear and so much needed, he says to you all, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh." Aye, the dead themselves speak from their coffins, and methinks I almost hear them saying, "There is but a step betwixt you and death."

But while God speaks with a voice so solemn and afflictive, he also speaks in tenderness and love. Though the stroke has been severe, yet it has been given by the hand of a compassionate Father, and there is in it something to mitigate your grief. For those who have gone, you have the christian's hope, and I trust, scriptural evidence that they died in Jesus. With confidence in the promises of Him who has redeemed them, you can in thought pursue their liberated spirits, in their rapid flight to that land of rest—

"Where saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Savior and brethren transported to greet;
While anthems of rapture incessantly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul."

And those of you who are the disciples of Christ in this time of affliction can have even a better source of consolation. You can go and tell Jesus. He can sustain and comfort you. He can bind up the wounded spirit, and mend the broken heart. Above all, he can even cheer your souls with the lively hope that when your brief sojourning here is ended, you will rest from your labors with those who have died in the Lord.

Those of you, also, who are not God's children, are invited to come to the same Savior for consolation. In the tenderness of his love he calls upon you to look away from the world and its delusive hopes to him. Even this providence itself, as afflictive and hard to be borne as it may seem, kindly admonishes you to lay yourselves broken-hearted and contrite for sin at Jesus' feet, and there seek for that permanent relief which alone can assuage the grief of the soul. Do this, my friends, and you will learn this surprising lesson of divine goodness, that God can make the severest affliction become the means of healing the greatest malady. Do this, and your sorrow, even now, will be turned to joy. Do this, and in the resurrection morning, with those dear friends who have slept in Jesus, whose loss you now mourn, you will come forth from your graves to shine as the "brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever."

